

April 1997

# JSTOR-A Non-Profit Working to Redefine Access to the Scholarly Journals

Ron Chepesiuk

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Chepesiuk, Ron (1997) "JSTOR-A Non-Profit Working to Redefine Access to the Scholarly Journals," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 9: Iss. 2, Article 9.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.2096>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

# JSTOR—A Non-Profit Working to Redefine Access to the Scholarly Journal

by Ron Chepesiuk <104551.2330@compuserve.com>



The problems facing libraries struggle to provide quick, easy and cheap access to the scholarly community is well known.

Costs of subscriptions to periodical titles are skyrocketing, while libraries try to find scarce and valuable space to house the scholarly publications that mushroom each year in quantity. In the age of MTV, college and university students — and even faculty — expect access on demand, which puts additional pressures on libraries trying to cope with shrinking staff and budgets.

Some pundits look at the remarkable advances in electronic publishing and predict that this new technology will offer the best way to deal with the serious problems facing libraries. Many libraries, however, have been wary of using the new technology without reservation. Some are even buying subscriptions to both the print and electronic versions of titles, a practice that may satisfy some library users, but also adds to the subscription costs.

What can be done to change the "scholarly journal syndrome"? JSTOR is one organization that has been working hard to find an answer by offering to help li-

braries and the scholarly community take advantage of the advances in information technology. In pursuing this mission, JSTOR (which stands for Journal STorage) says it "has adapted a system-wide perspective, taking into account the conflicting needs of libraries, publishers and scholars."

More specifically, JSTOR's goals include building a reliable and comprehensive archive of important scholarly journal literature, filling the gaps in existing library collections of journal backfiles, fostering the preservation of scholarly publications, substantially increasing access to them, finding ways to reduce the costs of library storage and the care of journal articles, and helping libraries and scholarly associations make the transition to the electronic age.

JSTOR grew out of a modest pilot project sponsored by the Mellon Foundation that had as its goal the providing of electronic access to the backfiles of ten journals in the fields of history and economics. Results show that the initial users were enthusiastic, and it was evident that the con-

cept had great promise. Consequently, JSTOR was established as a non-profit organization in August 1995 and officially launched on January 1, 1997. Although the Mellon Foundation provided the initial funding, JSTOR is now expected to be self-sustaining.

Today, JSTOR operates out of two offices: one in New York City, where the executive director, **Kevin Guthrie**, and three other full-time staff members (the General Council, the Director of Public Relations and two support staff) are located, and another office at the **University of Michigan** at Ann Arbor, where the production, technology and user support activities are centered. The University of Michigan operation is large and includes an archivist, four librarians, two systems programmers as full-time staff and a preservation librarian, catalog librarian and several clerical support staff as part-time. There is also a mirror site at **Princeton**

*continued on page 30*

## AMERICAN MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY

### MathSciNet®

30-day free trial!\*



Version 2  
now  
available!

[www.ams.org/mathscinet/](http://www.ams.org/mathscinet/)

Librarians, researchers, faculty, and students can use the World Wide Web to access one of the most extensive mathematical databases in the world.

A single search from the office, library, classroom, or home will yield a wealth of information unmatched by any other source.

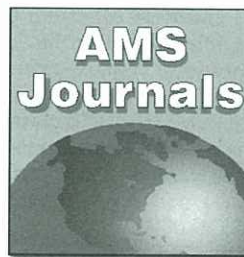
\*For more information, contact Senior Service Representative, Jacqueline Giroux at: 1-800-321-4267 or 401-455-4000, extension 4128, e-mail: [jcg@ams.org](mailto:jcg@ams.org)

### Searchable Electronic Journals from the AMS

Subscribe now so you can access the latest, high-quality peer-reviewed advances in mathematics. The timeliness and ease of the World Wide Web will enable you to search across and within AMS journals, browse, and print articles specifically in your discipline.

With AMS Electronic Journals, your access to information is enhanced with...

- Site-wide access
- Full-text searching
- Across journals searching
- Mathematical symbols
- Hypertext links
- Early availability
- Access to back issues
- Downloadable text



[www.ams.org/journals/](http://www.ams.org/journals/)

For subscription details, or for further information contact:  
AMS Customer Services Department ([cust-serv@ams.org](mailto:cust-serv@ams.org))  
800-321-4AMS (4267) or (401) 455-4000 (worldwide)



University, which includes two full-time and one part-time programmers, who are involved with research and development of the JSTOR systems.

JSTOR says it has set prices for access to its database as "close to its costs as possible, while providing assurance of long-term viability." To generate interest, JSTOR offered charter rates to all those institutions that had license agreements with it prior to April 1, 1997. The special offer meant a 25 percent discount of the standard fee and eligibility for other discounts in the future.

When *Against the Grain* asked JSTOR if it would extend its April 1 deadline for its subscribers, **Kristen Garlock**, a JSTOR spokesperson, said, "I'm afraid the April 1 deadline is fixed. We have sent mailings, though, to more than 2,000 libraries, so we hope that many of your readers will be aware of our presence."

In phase one, JSTOR plans to provide complete runs of at least 100 prominent journal titles in ten to fifteen subject areas. As of February 27, 1997, JSTOR had eleven titles available in three subject areas (ecology, economics, and history), including *Ecology*, *The American Economic Review*, *The Journal of Political Economy*, *The American History Review* and *The Journal of American History*. Mathematics, Philosophy and Sociology are the next three subject areas for which additional journals will be available. JSTOR has twenty universities and colleges as participants, including MIT, Harvard, Duke, Columbia, Johns Hopkins, Princeton, Lafayette College and Boston College.

JSTOR is not making available phase one journals on a title-by-title basis, but, instead, is offering different prices for different types of institutions in what it categorizes as large, medium, small, and very small. The classification is based on the 1994 *Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Learning*, which according to JSTOR, "groups American colleges and universities according to their missions, and thus offers an opportunity to vary pricing based on the degree to which an institution regards research as a full-time aim." So a medium institution for the purposes of JSTOR's classification is an institution with an enrollment of less than 7,500, awarded doctoral degrees of less than 100, and has a serials budget of less than \$750,000.

For more information, contact: JSTOR User and Production Services, 300 Hatcher North, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1205, Ph. 313-764-1314 (user services), 313-936-2363 (general), Fax: 313-647-6897, Email: [jstor-info@umich.edu](mailto:jstor-info@umich.edu), Web site: <http://www.jstor/>

JSTOR has two types of fees: a one-time "database development fee," which allows a participant permanent access rights to the information provided in phase one, and an "annual access fee," which is intended to cover recurring costs of completing and maintaining the archives. Database development fees range from \$40,000 (large), \$30,000 (medium), \$20,000 (small), and \$10,000 (very small) and the annual access fees from \$5,000 (large), \$4,000 (medium), \$3,000 (small) and \$2,000 (very small).

While JSTOR is focusing on making access available to institutions, it does hope eventually to offer individual subscriptions. "We do plan to offer individual subscriptions to independent researchers," Garlock said. "We hope to be able to offer more details about the subscriptions later this year. 'There is much to learn before we take that first step. First authenticating individual users is a complicated technical problem that we are working on, but for which we do not yet have a solution. Second, we have not yet established the business pricing models that would be viable and fair to all parties. We hope that by mid 1997 we will know more about individual authentication and might be able to begin assessing pricing models at that point.'"

JSTOR emphasizes that it is not involved in publishing current issues of journals, but rather acts as what it describes as a "trusted archive." "Current issues represent publishers' main, if not only revenue stream, and it is not the purpose of JSTOR to put that revenue at risk," JSTOR explains in its program statement. "We believe it is possible to work with publishers in a complimentary way that will be to everyone's benefit." JSTOR, however, hopes to establish what it calls "technological linkages" that will "make it possible for users to search seamlessly for the current issue right back through to the last issue in the JSTOR archive."

JSTOR's conversion of the backfiles of scholarly publications is taking place at three sites and begins at the main office in New York City, moves to the **Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library** at the University of Michigan and ends at the **Offshore Keyboarding Corporation** (a division of **Digital Imaging Technologies**) at Bridgetown, the Barbados. The New York office works with journal publishers to obtain a non-exclusive license that will allow JSTOR to convert and make available titles in digital format. At the University of Michigan, journal titles are inventoried and indexed before they are sent to Offshore Keyboarding Corporation for scanning at 600 dpi resolution and where a table of contents file is keyed for each article in the journal run.


The final stage of the production takes place again at the University of Michigan where staff load files from CD-ROM to JSTOR file servers. Once all these steps

are completed, JSTOR announces the availability of the titles to participants.

Although JSTOR stores data in both image and text-based form, it has decided, for practical purposes, to provide only images. Noting that there has been considerable debate about which form should be used, JSTOR, after careful study, decided to go with the image-based database. It has several reasons for doing so. Specifically, the non-text material in scholarly publications cannot be displayed with 100 percent accuracy using text-based methods currently available to standard Web browsers and, according to JSTOR, an image-based approach ensures "the integrity of materials in the database, while also retaining the 'appearance' of the journal in its original presentation, which is important for many people."

JSTOR's licensing terms include many features that will appeal to libraries. For example, it interprets the term "authorized user" liberally to include anyone working in the library. Access, moreover, is available to users when they are outside the library and in, for example, their dorm room or office. Although JSTOR database content is intended for the non-commercial use of authorized users, the non-profit status permits users to print out one electronic copy of scientific articles in the storage base. In addition, participants may use materials printed from the database for interlibrary loan purposes for two years. Licensees with problems can contact JSTOR's support services by phone, fax or email, Monday through Friday, during regular business hours.

JSTOR's hardware and software requirements are as follows: MAC, PC or UNIX workstations with LAN connection and TCP/IP installed; direct parallel or LAN-attached Postscript printers. For best performance, JSTOR suggests an 800x 600 (17") monitor and Netscape Internet Software as the browser, and Postscript level 2 printers and Internet connectivity of at least 1.5 mbits/sec (T1 line).

Garlock summarized JSTOR's future plans for *Against the Grain* — "Phase one covers a three-year period that began in January 1, 1996. In Phase I, we are offering access only to the collection as a whole, but in Phase II, we will offer the option of selecting special clusters of journals. We hope that libraries and the scholarly community benefit from our endeavors and appreciate any feedback." 

*Contributing Editor Ron Chapesiuk is professor on the faculty of Winthrop University and serves the library profession in numerous capacities. Among others, he is EDITOR-IN-CHIEF of INTERNATIONAL LEADS, the international arm of ALA, and contributing editor to AMERICAN LIBRARIES, REFERENCE BOOKS BULLETIN, and INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY TIMES.*